

Special Educational Needs and Challenging Behaviour: A Post-Primary, Whole School Approach

Handout 6: Monitoring / Supporting On-Task Work

Strategy	What it means
<i>Prompting</i>	A signal to the student to begin or continue a task (or to stop an inappropriate behaviour). It may be a statement or a question or be done verbally, non-verbally or visually.
<i>Gesture</i>	Can be 'thumbs up', a smile or a nod. May need to be done discreetly with some students who may not like public positive reinforcement. Non-verbal signals reduce intrusion into the lesson.
<i>Tactical Ignoring</i>	If the student complies with the direction but does so with 'attitude', for example slamming books down on the desk etc, the secondary behaviour can be tactically ignored. The initial objective has been achieved; the student has complied with the teacher instruction. Responding to these behaviours is likely to be confrontational, certainly distracts from the flow of the lesson and can be humiliating for the student, thus damaging the teacher/student relationship.
<i>Proximity Control</i>	Move near to the student displaying the inappropriate behaviour / not working on task. This alone may focus the student on the task to be commenced / continued. Know your student – sometimes this may be a trigger for further agitation.
<i>Scaffolding / Hurdle help</i>	If the task is too difficult, then offer a scaffold (think of a 'leg-up' or a 'push-off') to get the student started and over the first hurdle. They may be on their way once this fence is jumped. It can also appear later in the task – same principle applies.
<i>Redirection</i>	Rather than getting stuck on telling the student to stop a particular behaviour, focus their attention in a different way by distracting them, then redirecting them to original task. Could also be a simple question: "What should you be doing now"?
<i>Assertive Direction</i>	Students need clear instructions and are more likely to comply if they are delivered assertively. Assertive instructions also help preserve positive relationships with students. For example "I need you to move to that seat thank you." "I want you to be quiet while I'm speaking..... thanks." The use of "Thank you" following the instructions allows teacher to model politeness whilst conveying an expectation that students will comply. Tone of voice makes it clear that this is an instruction, not a request.



<i>Direction And Delay</i>	Students may not feel able to comply with teacher instructions because of peer pressure. There are times when giving the student thinking time after the teacher has disengaged eye contact and possibly moved away helps the student to comply and not lose face with their peers.
<i>Use of names</i>	Where possible, use students' first names. It reaffirms but also helps to refocus. e.g. "Sean (pause and wait for eye contact or acknowledgement, then, in a lower tone) <i>settling down, thanks / do you need help? / what are you supposed to be doing now?</i> "
<i>Focus On Students Making Choices</i>	Students are more likely to co-operate if they feel that they have some control over themselves and their choices. If we present two choices that are both acceptable to us then students are less likely to make a different and unacceptable choice. "Deirdre, come on in. You can sit here, or there."
<i>Pause For Emphasis</i>	Directions to students can appear vague or jumbled unless their attention is focused. Use a pause and a look to ensure students are concentrating on what you are saying.
<i>Label The Behaviour, Not The Student</i>	When directly confronting inappropriate behaviour student self-esteem is vulnerable. Express disapproval of behaviour, not of students themselves. Use I statements for example: 'I feel annoyed when you are interrupting me, listen quietly, thanks' ('I' messages). "You are an extremely rude boy – shut up" ('You' messages, which can be confrontational).
<i>Rules To Provide Distance</i>	Correcting students with direct reference to rules shifts possible resentment away from teachers. Students are encouraged to remember agreements they made to keep the class rules. For example "Martha, what's our rule on talking to the group?"
<i>Broken Record</i>	A first response to overt non compliance could be to repeat the assertive statement in a carefully controlled neutral way, possibly up to two or three times.
<i>Partial Agreement</i>	Students who try to justify their non compliance are trying to express their own needs that are not compatible with the needs of the teacher or class. Acknowledgement of these needs allows a connection that can stimulate compliance. Follow up with a repeat of the assertive direction. For example "I know Alex has been helping you with that work but I need you to move to that chair".
<i>Choice/ Consequence</i>	Persistent or blatant non-compliance with an instruction will require a response which sets limits to student behaviour. Before a consequence is imposed, students should be given an explicit choice, to comply or to accept the consequence. For example "Sarah, I need you to move to that chair over there now, or you will stay behind after class. Your choice". Teacher detaches eye contact and moves away.



